



News Release

Pacific Islands External Affairs Office



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Federal and State Governments Approve Safe Harbor Agreement with Chevron Hawaii Refinery

*Plan Provides for Protection and Conservation
of Endangered Hawaiian Waterbirds*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and the State of Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) have approved a 6-year Safe Harbor Agreement with Chevron Hawaii Refinery in recognition of its ongoing efforts to protect endangered waterbirds.

The detailed agreement encourages proactive management by Chevron Hawaii Refinery that benefits the endangered Hawaiian stilt and Hawaiian coot at its James Campbell Industrial Park refinery and provides regulatory assurances to Chevron that no additional restrictions will be imposed on future land, water, or resource use on its lands due to increased numbers of stilts and coots.

“Chevron has worked closely with the Service since 1992 to protect and conserve the stilt and coot,” said Patrick Leonard, field supervisor for the Fish and Wildlife Service’s Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office. “Chevron’s commitment to these two endangered birds shows that government and private industry can work effectively and amicably together toward the common goal of protecting wildlife and their habitats.”

“We welcome the opportunity for the state to partner with Chevron and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in this important conservation project,” said Peter Young, DLNR chairperson. “It is this kind of cooperative effort that will provide a long-term future for our native wildlife and their ecosystems,” he said.

Chevron will manage 6 acres of stilt nesting habitat at Rowland’s Pond and 5 acres of coot foraging habitat at the Impounding Basin and Oxidation Ponds, which are surrounded by tanks that store crude oil and petroleum products.

The 6-acre Rowland’s Pond – named after the refinery’s first plant manager – is fed by storm water and clean, treated water. Hawaiian stilts were attracted to the site in 1992 following the availability of an invertebrate population in Rowland’s Pond. Hawaiian coots were first observed at the refinery in 1997 and two pairs of coots have nested since 2000.

Pond areas within the refinery are not managed to create permanent populations of stilts or coots, but rather to provide temporary habitat that will help maintain and increase populations until other natural wetland areas are protected, restored, and managed. For

example, the Department of Land and Natural Resources is working with several partners to restore the 70-acre Pouhala Marsh, located approximately 8 miles northeast of the Chevron Hawaii Refinery. Efforts to restore the marsh are expected to be completed by the time this agreement expires.

The finalized agreement authorizes Chevron Hawaii Refinery, via federal permit and state license, to incidentally take coots and stilts that have increased above the baseline. Baseline numbers for the two species were determined from the average number of adults observed at the refinery's open water ponds during monthly visits conducted during the nonbreeding season from September 2001 to September 2002. The established baseline for the Hawaiian stilt is 21 adult birds, and for the Hawaiian coot is 4 adult birds.

Chevron Hawaii Refinery has an obligation under the agreement and permit/license to ensure that the populations of stilts and coots do not go below these established baselines. However, Chevron is not responsible for any natural fluctuation in the number of stilts and coots as long as they are meeting the requirements of the agreement.

From 1993 -2003, Chevron has worked with the Service under a Cooperative Agreement to manage its open water ponds for stilt temporary nesting habitat and implemented predator control. As a result of this cooperative effort, 361 Hawaiian stilts and 12 coots were added to the statewide population. From 14 to 51 stilts and up to 9 coots fledge each year at the site. The smaller numbers for Hawaiian coots can be attributed to the fact that the birds did not begin breeding at the site until 2000.

The total population of Hawaiian stilts statewide is estimated between 1,200 and 1,500 individuals, and the Hawaiian coot's statewide estimate is between 1,500 and 3,000 individuals.

Hawaii's waterbirds and their habitats have suffered greatly as a result of habitat destruction caused by the draining and filling of wetlands for agricultural, residential, and industrial development. Populations also were affected by over-hunting and the introduction of invasive species such as cats, dogs, mongooses, and rats. This ever-increasing loss of native wetland habitat and high predation rates make management of Chevron Hawaii Refinery's open water ponds an important interim recovery strategy that will lead to a net conservation benefit to both species until native habitat is restored.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

Note to Editors: Still and video footage is available by calling Ken Foote at 808 792 9535